DARK HORSE COMICS

ALIENS/
PREDATOR
5 OF 12

$2.50 US
$3.40 CAN

ALIENS™

THE DEADLIEST OF THE SPECIES

PREDATOR™

CLAREMONT • BARRETO

Christopher Claremont • writer
Eduardo Barreto • artist
Tom Orzechowski • letterer
Gregory Wright • colorist
John Bolton • cover artist

Diana Schutz • editor
Scott Tice • book design
Sean Tierney, Jimmy Johns, Matt Hollingsworth • special effects

H.R. Giger • original Alien design

Previously:

Having discovered that the Predator of her nightmares was being held captive aboard her husband's corporate skyliner, Caryn Delacroix managed to free the fearsome creature, but not without cost: in the course of their harrowing escape, the Predator was severly wounded and Montcalm-Delacroix et Cie's corporate security chief Gisande Salazar was badly burned in an ensuing fire. The unlikely duo of human and alien then set off for parts unknown in the Predator's spacecraft – leaving Lucien Delacroix's son Willem unable to deliver his prize catch, as promised, to the enigmatic Professor DeMatier.

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Neil Hankerson • executive vice president
David Scroggy • vice president of publishing
Lou Bank • vice president of sales & marketing
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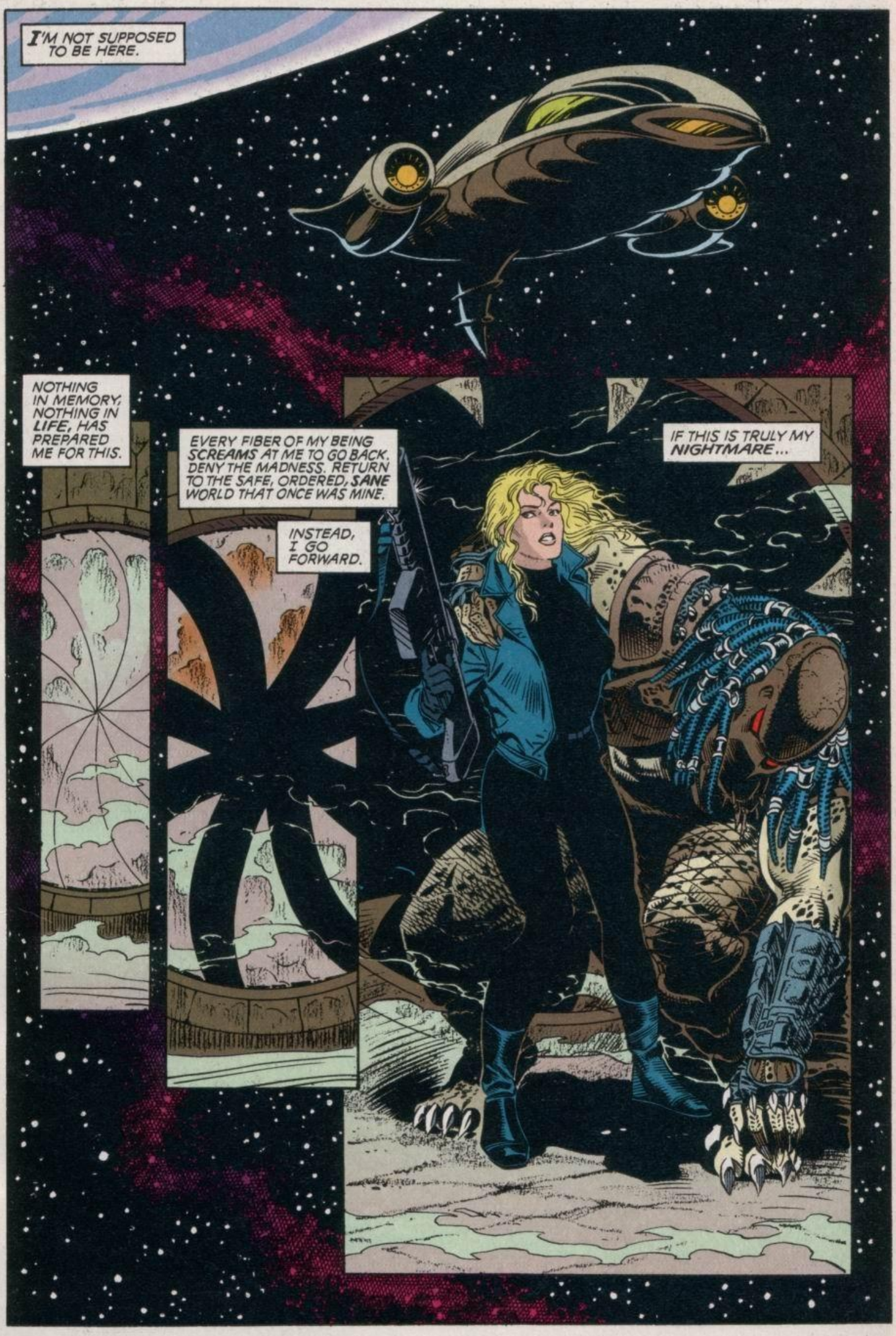
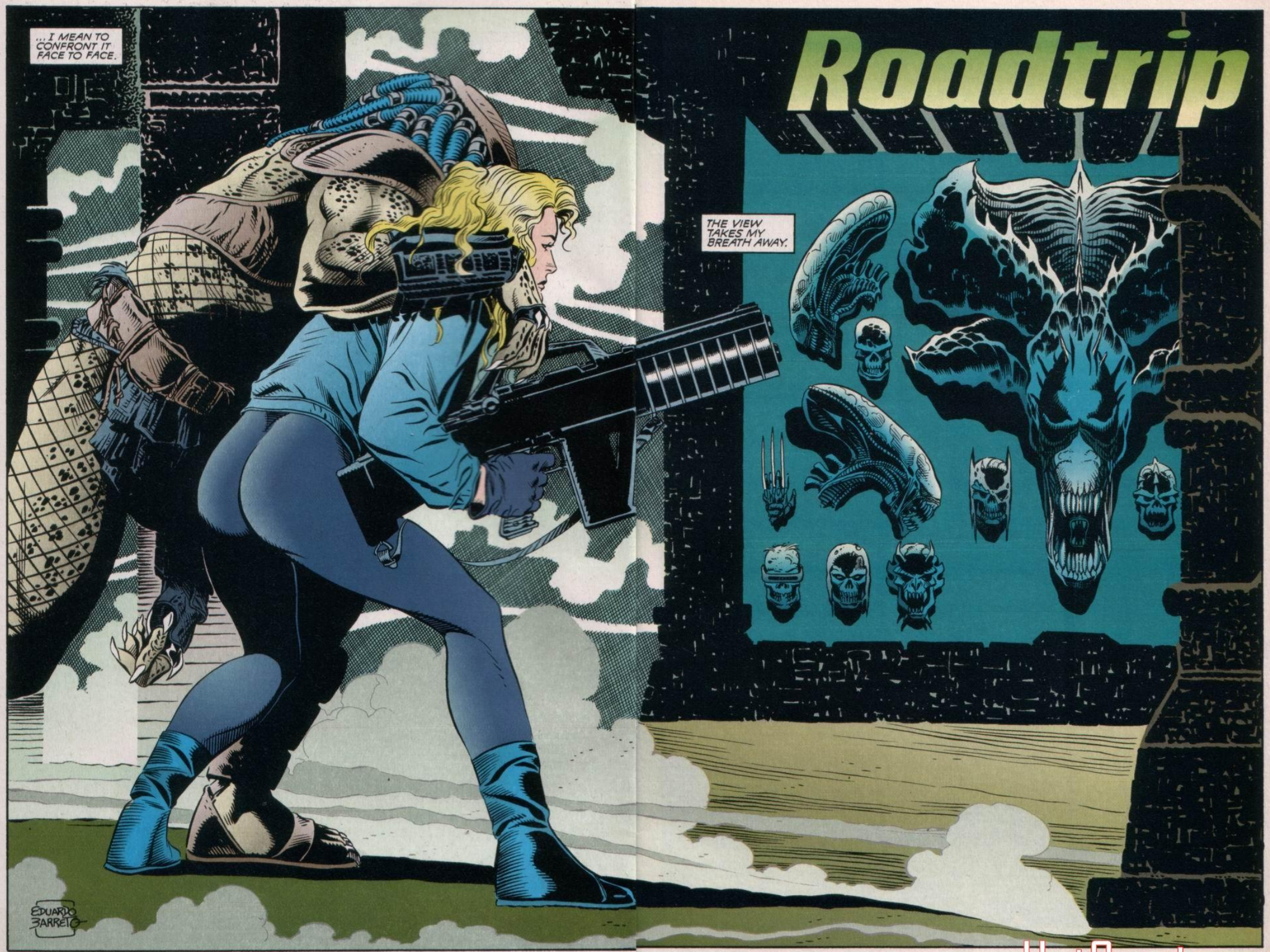

I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO BE HERE.
NOTHING IN MEMORY, NOTHING IN LIFE, HAS PREPARED ME FOR THIS.
EVERY FIBER OF MY BEING SCREAMS AT ME TO GO BACK. DENY THE MADNESS. RETURN TO THE SAFE, ORDERED, SANE WORLD THAT ONCE WAS MINE.
INSTEAD, I GO FORWARD.
IF THIS IS TRULY MY NIGHTMARE...



Roadtrip

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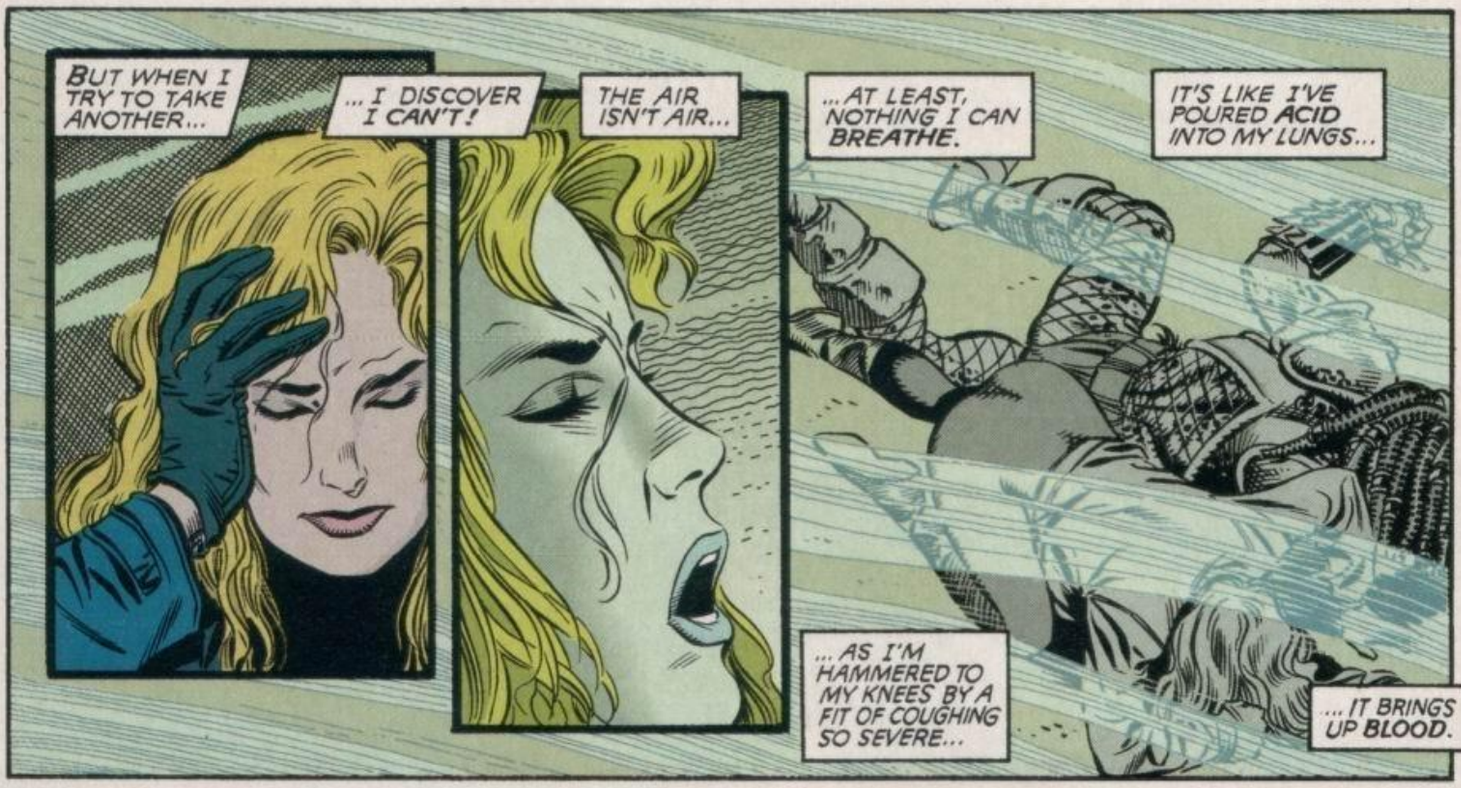
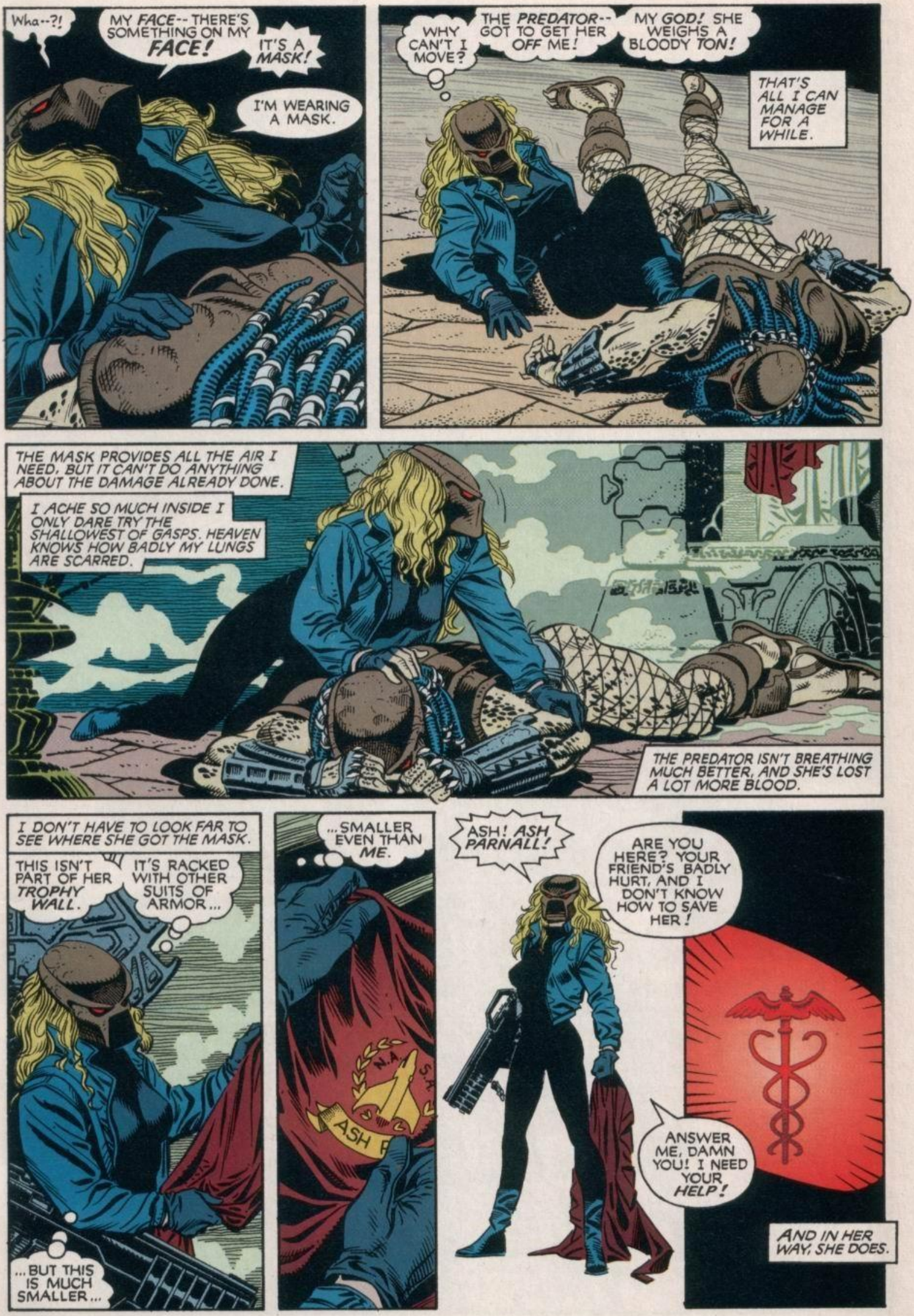
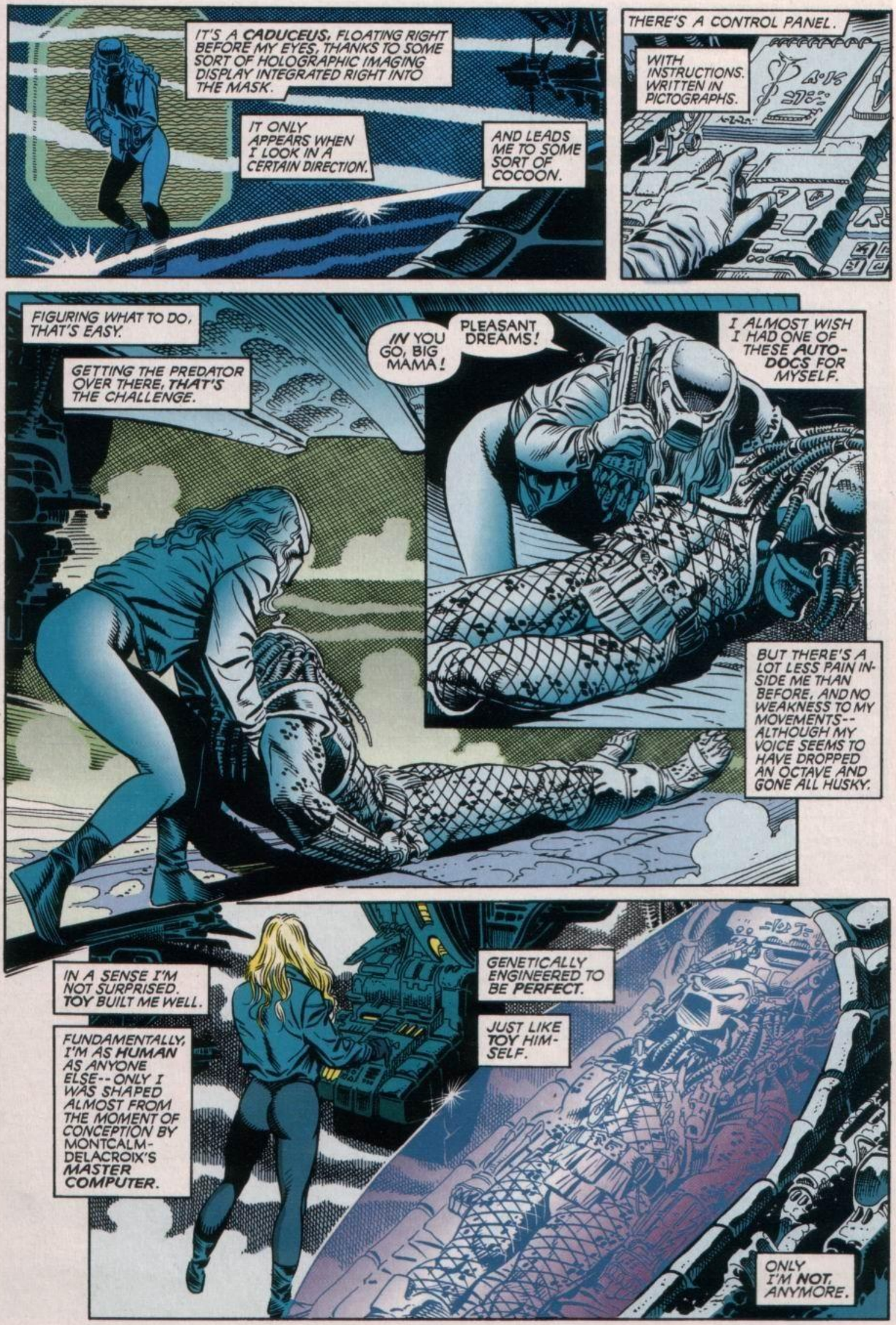

BUT WHEN I TRY TO TAKE ANOTHER...
... I DISCOVER I CAN'T!
THE AIR ISN'T AIR...
...AT LEAST, NOTHING I CAN BREATHE.
IT'S LIKE I'VE POURED ACID INTO MY LUNGS...
... AS I'M HAMMERED TO MY KNEES BY A FIT OF COUGHING SO SEVERE...
... IT BRINGS UP BLOOD.

SO MUCH FOR MY DREAMS.
ASH... PARNALL...?
CARYN... DELACROIX ...


Wha--?!
MY FACE-- THERE'S SOMETHING ON MY FACE!
IT'S A MASK!
I'M WEARING A MASK.
WHY CAN'T I MOVE?
THE PREDATOR-- GOT TO GET HER OFF ME!
MY GOD! SHE WEIGHS A BLOODY TON!
THAT'S ALL I CAN MANAGE FOR A WHILE.
THE MASK PROVIDES ALL THE AIR I NEED, BUT IT CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT THE DAMAGE ALREADY DONE.
I ACHE SO MUCH INSIDE I ONLY DARE TRY THE SHALLOWEST OF GASPS. HEAVEN KNOWS HOW BADLY MY LUNGS ARE SCARRED.
THE PREDATOR ISN'T BREATHING MUCH BETTER, AND SHE'S LOST A LOT MORE BLOOD.
I DON'T HAVE TO LOOK FAR TO SEE WHERE SHE GOT THE MASK.
THIS ISN'T PART OF HER TROPHY WALL.
IT'S RACKED WITH OTHER SUITS OF ARMOR...
...BUT THIS IS MUCH SMALLER...
...SMALLER EVEN THAN ME.
ASH! ASH PARNALL!
ARE YOU HERE? YOUR FRIEND'S BADLY HURT, AND I DON'T KNOW HOW TO SAVE HER!
ANSWER ME, DAMN YOU! I NEED YOUR HELP!
AND IN HER WAY, SHE DOES.


IT'S A CADUCEUS, FLOATING RIGHT BEFORE MY EYES, THANKS TO SOME SORT OF HOLOGRAPHIC IMAGING DISPLAY INTEGRATED RIGHT INTO THE MASK.
IT ONLY APPEARS WHEN I LOOK IN A CERTAIN DIRECTION.
AND LEADS ME TO SOME SORT OF COCOON.
THERE'S A CONTROL PANEL.
WITH INSTRUCTIONS. WRITTEN IN PICTOGRAPHS.
FIGURING WHAT TO DO, THAT'S EASY.
GETTING THE PREDATOR OVER THERE, THAT'S THE CHALLENGE.
IN YOU GO, BIG MAMA!
PLEASANT DREAMS!
I ALMOST WISH I HAD ONE OF THESE AUTO-DOCS FOR MYSELF.
BUT THERE'S A LOT LESS PAIN INSIDE ME THAN BEFORE, AND NO WEAKNESS TO MY MOVEMENTS-- ALTHOUGH MY VOICE SEEMS TO HAVE DROPPED AN OCTAVE AND GONE ALL HUSKY.
IN A SENSE I'M NOT SURPRISED. TOY BUILT ME WELL.
FUNDAMENTALLY, I'M AS HUMAN AS ANYONE ELSE-- ONLY I WAS SHAPED ALMOST FROM THE MOMENT OF CONCEPTION BY MONTCALM-DELACROIX'S MASTER COMPUTER.
GENETICALLY ENGINEERED TO BE PERFECT.
JUST LIKE TOY HIMSELF.
ONLY I'M NOT, ANYMORE.

I DON'T LIKE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THAT TRAIN OF THOUGHT.
I DECIDE TO GO EXPLORING INSTEAD.
IT'S A BIG SHIP--SHOULD KEEP ME OCCUPIED AWHILE.

AT FIRST GLANCE, WE SEEM SO MUCH ALIKE, THE PREDATOR AND I.
ANOTHER PICTO-GRAPH!

THE PREDATOR'S FACE.
HER QUARTERS, MAYBE?

TWO ARMS, TWO LEGS, STANDING ERECT WITH THE HEAD ATOP A CENTRAL TORSO. SHE USES HUMAN WEAPONS --I CAN EVIDENTLY WEAR HER GEAR.
KLAKT

BUT EVERY SO OFTEN, I FIND MYSELF REMINDED OF HOW TRULY ALIEN WE ARE.
WHRUMM

SORT OF THE SAME WAY I'M COMING TO FEEL ABOUT MYSELF.
I'M A TROPHY WIFE, THE IDEAL CONSORT, DESIGNED FOR LOVE NOT WAR.

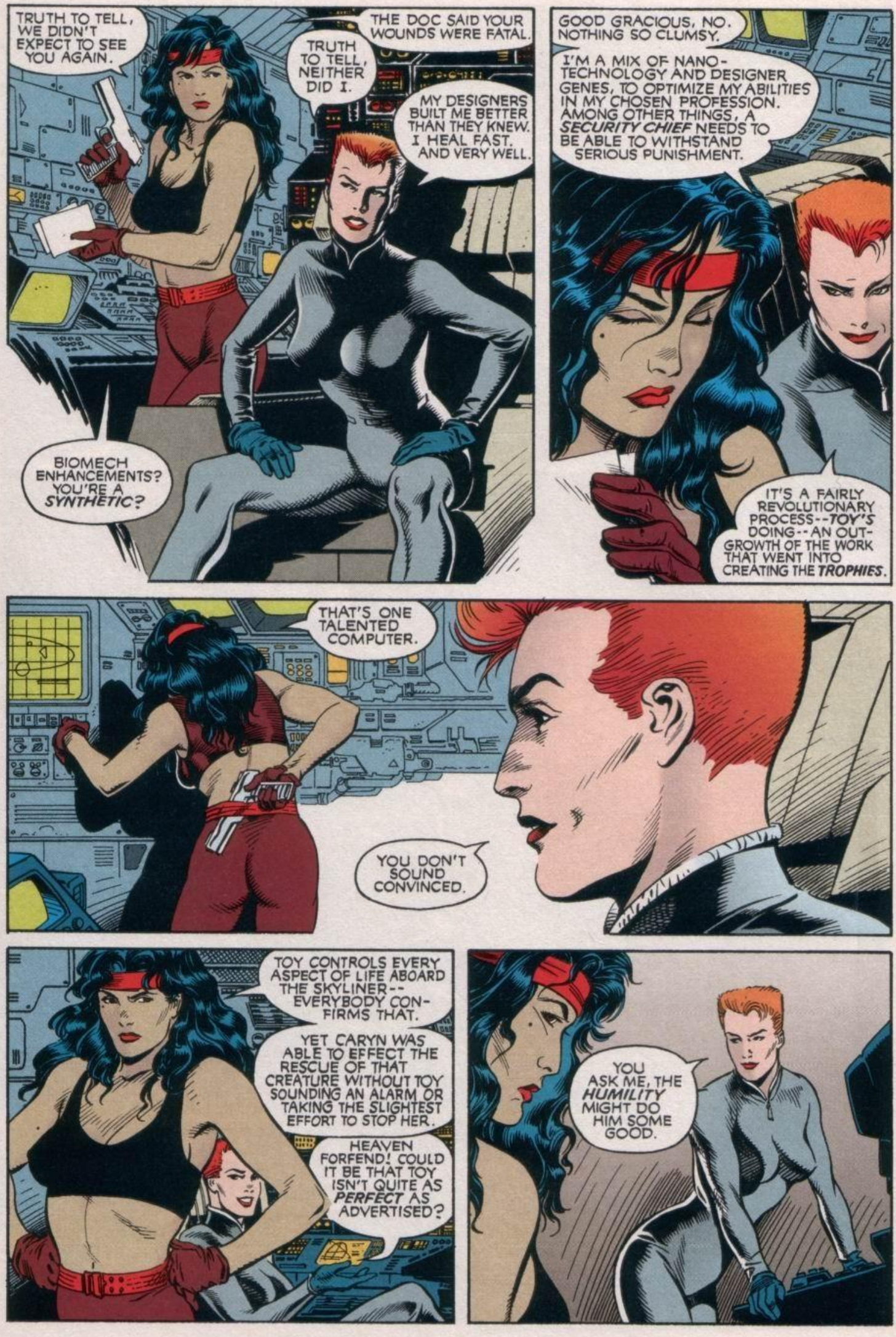
YET I HANDLE THIS PULSE RIFLE AS THOUGH I'VE BEEN DOING IT MY ENTIRE LIFE.
AND I SCOUT THE VESSEL WITH A COMBAT TROOPER'S BATTLE-HONED SKILL.

ONLY ONE OTHER COMPARTMENT SHOWS A SIGN OF BEING OCCUPIED.
A HUMAN FACE, ONE THAT HAUNTS MY DREAMS.
ASH PARNALL?
THE ROOM'S NEAT, BUT IT'S OBVIOUS THAT NO ONE'S BEEN IN HERE FOR AGES.
THE CLOTHES I FIND ARE MILITARY.
AND THEY'RE ALL TOO SMALL FOR ME.
I DON'T MUCH MIND-- I WOULDN'T WEAR THEM IF I COULD.
I'M A TROPHY-- I WEAR ONLY THE BEST.
THESE MAY BE PRACTICAL AND COMFORTABLE, BUT THEY HAVE ALL THE STYLE OF A DEAD BRICK.
WHAT BROUGHT YOU TOGETHER, ASH...
...YOU AND THE PREDATOR?
WHEN I THINK OF HER, IT'S NATURAL TO CALL HER "BIG MAMA."
ARE YOU TWO SOMEHOW RELATED?
ARE WE?
IS THAT WHY I'M INVOLVED?
ONE PICTURE'S OBVIOUSLY FAMILY-- THE RESEMBLANCE IS EASY TO SEE.
THE PHOTO'S OLD.
THE OTHER'S STAINED.
WITH TEARS.
AND BLOOD.

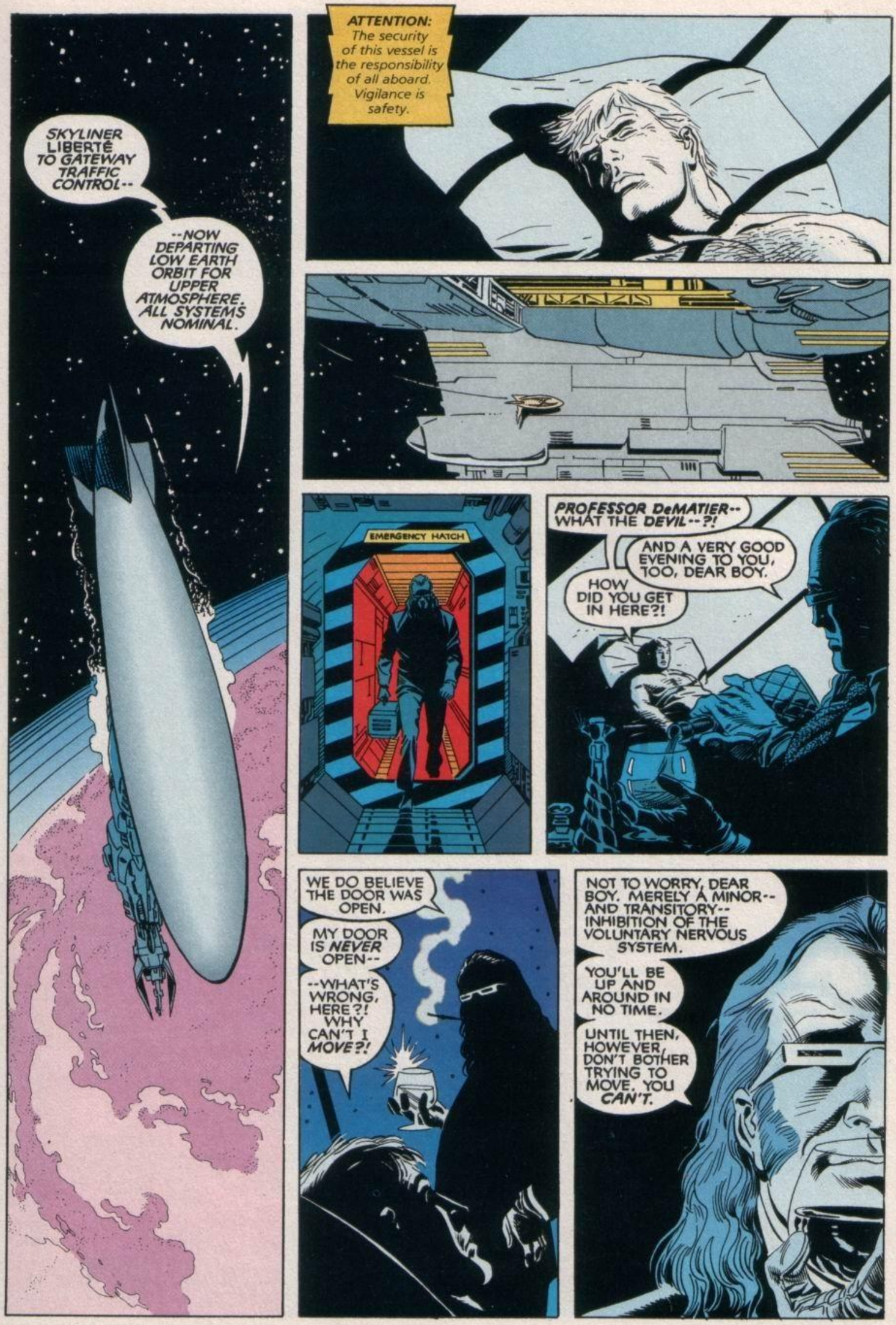
EVENTUALLY, I MAKE MY WAY TO THE FLIGHT DECK.
KLEK
FWOOSH!
AIR!
WITH A METHANE UNDERTASTE, TRUE, BUT SAFE ENOUGH TO BREATHE. I'LL SETTLE FOR THAT.
YOU'RE VERY GOOD, ASH...
...WHOEVER THE HELL YOU ARE.
FIRST, YOU FIGURE OUT HOW TO FLY THIS BUCKET.
AND THEN YOU COME UP WITH A WAY TO PASS ALONG THAT INFORMATION TO WHO-EVER COMES ABOARD.
DOESN'T MATTER IF THEY DON'T SPEAK YOUR LANGUAGE, DOESN'T EVEN MATTER IF THEY'RE ILLITERATE...
...YOU MADE IT SIMPLE ENOUGH FOR ANYONE TO PUZZLE OUT.
ONLY ONE PROBLEM, I'M AFRAID.
NOW THAT I'M BLESSED WITH ALL THIS KNOWLEDGE--
--WHAT THE HELL AM I SUPPOSED TO DO WITH IT?!

WHY AM I HERE?
WHAT DOES THAT CREATURE-- WHAT DO YOU-- WANT OF ME?!
WHAT IS HAPPENING ?!?
YOU'VE SUPPLIED EXPLANATIONS FOR JUST ABOUT EVERY-THING ELSE HERE--
--WHY THE BLOODY HELL CAN'T YOU ANSWER ME THAT?!
LEAVE ME ALONE, WHY CAN'T YOU?
I DON'T WANT ANY MORE OF THIS-- I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOU OR YOUR DAMN MYSTERY--
-- I JUST WANT TO GO HOME!
I JUST WANT TO GO HOME!
I JUST WANT TO GO HOME!

NEAR EARTH SPACE, HARD BY GATEWAY STATION...
APPLESEED
BRIAREOS MODE 9 C3
NEXUS
YOU'VE GOT A HELLUVA NERVE, SALAZAR, TRESPASSING ON MY FLIGHT DECK!
COMES WITH THE TERRITORY, DON'T'CHA KNOW, DeMEDICI, WHEN YOU'RE JUST BACK FROM THE DEAD.
ACTUALLY, I WAS LOOKING FOR YOU OR SHIROW. THIS SEEMED LIKE THE LOGICAL PLACE TO START.
I DIDN'T MEAN TO PRY.
NEXT TIME, HAVE US PAGED.
I HAVE YOUR COMMISSION FROM LUCIEN.


TRUTH TO TELL, WE DIDN'T EXPECT TO SEE YOU AGAIN.
THE DOC SAID YOUR WOUNDS WERE FATAL.
TRUTH TO TELL, NEITHER DID I.
MY DESIGNERS BUILT ME BETTER THAN THEY KNEW. I HEAL FAST. AND VERY WELL.
BIOMECH ENHANCEMENTS? YOU'RE A *SYNTHETIC*?
GOOD GRACIOUS, NO. NOTHING SO CLUMSY.
I'M A MIX OF NANO-TECHNOLOGY AND DESIGNER GENES, TO OPTIMIZE MY ABILITIES IN MY CHOSEN PROFESSION. AMONG OTHER THINGS, A *SECURITY CHIEF* NEEDS TO BE ABLE TO WITHSTAND SERIOUS PUNISHMENT.
IT'S A FAIRLY REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS--*TOY'S* DOING--AN OUT-GROWTH OF THE WORK THAT WENT INTO CREATING THE *TROPHIES*.
THAT'S ONE TALENTED COMPUTER.
YOU DON'T SOUND CONVINCED.
TOY CONTROLS EVERY ASPECT OF LIFE ABOARD THE SKYLINER--EVERYBODY CONFIRMS THAT.
YET CARYN WAS ABLE TO EFFECT THE RESCUE OF THAT CREATURE WITHOUT TOY SOUNDING AN ALARM OR TAKING THE SLIGHTEST EFFORT TO STOP HER.
HEAVEN FORFEND! COULD IT BE THAT TOY ISN'T QUITE AS *PERFECT* AS ADVERTISED?
YOU ASK ME, THE *HUMILITY* MIGHT DO HIM SOME GOOD.

CONSIDERING THE POWER TOY WIELDS OVER THE SKYLINER'S OPERATION, DOESN'T THAT CONCERN YOU?
LIBERTÉ ISN'T A WARSHIP, MARIA, AND TOY ISN'T A BATTLE NETWORK. MONTCALM-DELACROIX IS AN ENTERTAINMENT CONGLOMERATE. BASICALLY, TOY'S ROLE IS TO HELP MAKE MOVIES.
ALWAYS ASSUMING HE ISN'T WORKING ON A SURPRISE SCENARIO ALL HIS OWN.
IMPOSSIBLE. FOR ALL HIS SOPHISTICATION, TOY IS STILL ONLY A COMPUTER. HE'S LIMITED BY HIS CORE PROGRAMMING.
IF YOU SAY SO.
YO, MARIA, YOU AREN'T GOING TO BELIEVE WHO JUST WALTZED ABOARD.
YO, SHIROW, CLEAR YOUR PEEPS, M'MAN, AN' SWEEP THE FIELD. WHO YOU THINK I GOT SITTIN' UP HERE WITH ME?
SHE JUST BROUGHT OUR ORDERS.
I KNOW. I JUST SCANNED THE COPY DOWNLOADED INTO MY BUFFER. IT SAYS SHE'S PART OF THE TEAM.
WE WORK ALONE, MS. SALAZAR.
SO I TOLD LUCIEN.
AT LONG LAST, I WAS ALLOWED TO SEE YOUR DOSSIERS. I WAS IMPRESSED. I WAS ALSO OVERRULED.
BOTH OF YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND. LUCIEN DELACROIX IS HEAD OF THIS CORPORATION. YOU HAVE NO IDEA OF THE EXTENT OF HIS POWER. AND YOU REALLY DON'T WANT TO FIND OUT.
HE WANTS HIS TROPHY BACK-- NO QUESTIONS, NO EXCUSES --AND HE'S PREPARED TO DO WHATEVER'S NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE THAT GOAL.
IF WE WANT OUR LIVES BACK, FREE AND CLEAR...
...THEN WE DO AS WE'RE TOLD. AND PRAY WE'RE NOT ALREADY TOO LATE.
W. WOOD SPACECRAFT CO.


SKYLINER LIBERTÉ TO GATEWAY TRAFFIC CONTROL--
--NOW DEPARTING LOW EARTH ORBIT FOR UPPER ATMOSPHERE. ALL SYSTEMS NOMINAL.
ATTENTION: The security of this vessel is the responsibility of all aboard. Vigilance is safety.
EMERGENCY HATCH
PROFESSOR DeMATIER-- WHAT THE DEVIL--?!
AND A VERY GOOD EVENING TO YOU, TOO, DEAR BOY.
HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE?!
WE DO BELIEVE THE DOOR WAS OPEN.
MY DOOR IS NEVER OPEN--
--WHAT'S WRONG, HERE?! WHY CAN'T I MOVE?!
NOT TO WORRY, DEAR BOY. MERELY A MINOR-- AND TRANSITORY-- INHIBITION OF THE VOLUNTARY NERVOUS SYSTEM.
YOU'LL BE UP AND AROUND IN NO TIME.
UNTIL THEN, HOWEVER, DON'T BOTHER TRYING TO MOVE. YOU CAN'T.

DAMN YOU, PROFESSOR, THIS ISN'T FUNNY!
QUITE SO.
IF THE *SECURITATE* WERE TO FIND YOU--!

DEAR, *DEAR* BOY, THE VERY FACT THAT WE ARE *HERE*, SHARING YOUR COMPANY-- IN THE *FLESH*, SO TO SPEAK--
-- SHOULD BE MOST ELOQUENT TESTIMONY TO THE SKILL OF YOUR CORPORATE SECURITY SERVICES.
NOT TO MENTION YOUR VAUNTED HOUSE COMPUTER, THE EVER-UBIQUITOUS *TOY*.

WHAT DO YOU WANT? WHY HAVE YOU DONE THIS?
WEREN'T YOU LISTENING WHEN LAST WE SPOKE? WAS IT SO DIFFICULT A THING I ASKED OF YOU?
YOU ASSURED ME IT COULD BE DONE. YET... DO WE HAVE OUR PREDATOR?

IT ESCAPED! *CARYN* HELPED IT!
YOUR FATHER'S *TROPHY WIFE*?
HARDLY CHARACTERISTIC, DEAR BOY, OF THE BREED OR THE WOMAN HERSELF. PERHAPS THE REASON *LUCIEN* ESTEEMS HER SO HIGHLY.

SPEAKING OF WOMEN, DEAR BOY, WERE WE NOT ALSO PROMISED-- FROM THE VERY INCEPTION OF OUR RELATIONSHIP-- THE USE OF YOUR ILLUSTRIOUS COMPEER, *MS. SALAZAR*, ONCE HER USE-FULNESS TO THE PROJECT CAME TO AN END?
MY-- MY FATHER-- MY FATHER HAD AN *ASSIGNMENT* FOR HER.
WILLEM, DEAR, *DEAR* WILLEM, WHAT KIND OF FOOL DO YOU TAKE US FOR, hmmm?

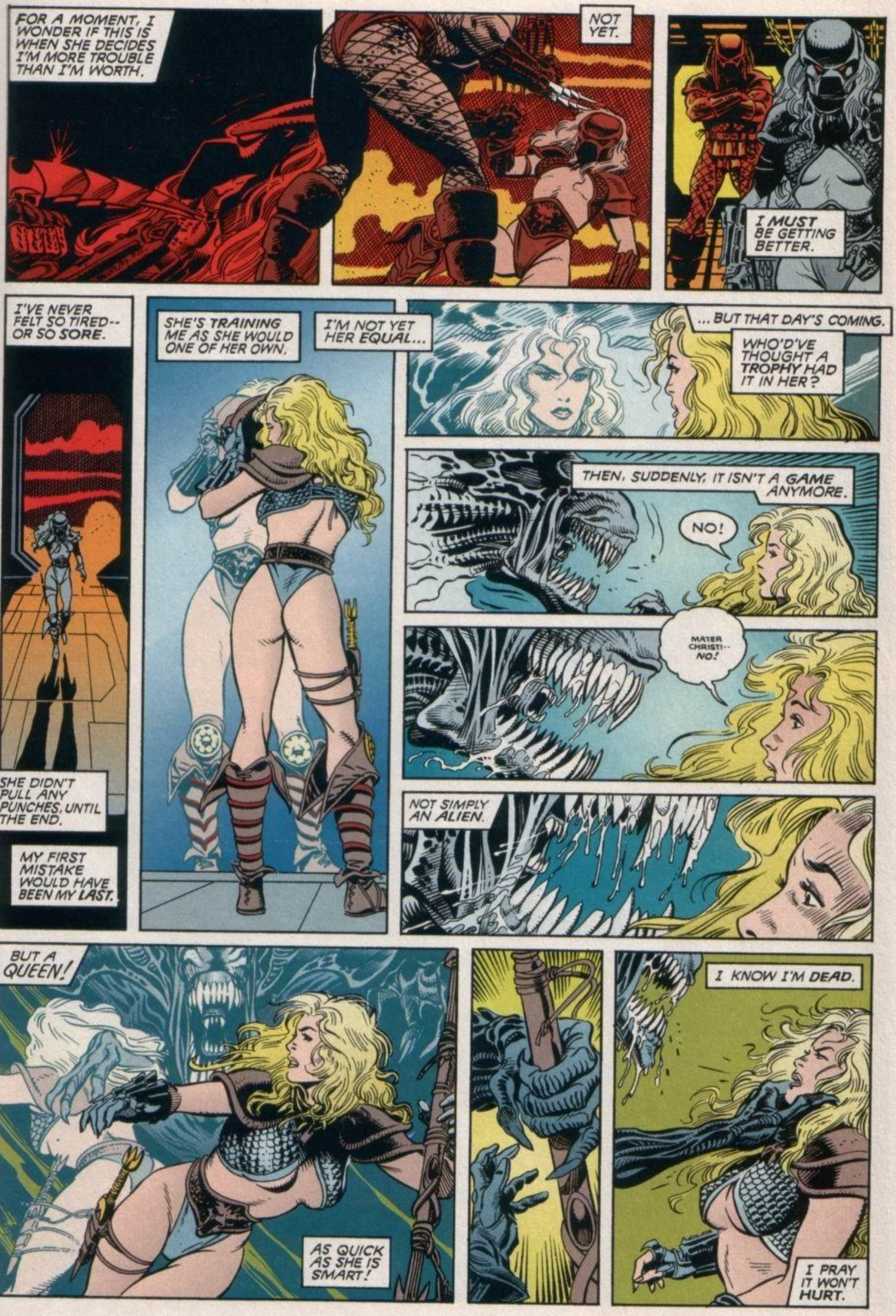
WE SAW THE TAPES. IT'S A MIRACLE SHE SURVIVED THE INITIAL EXPLOSION--SHE SHOULD HAVE DIED RIGHT THEN AND THERE--YET NOW YOU INSIST THAT SHE'S RECOVERED SUFFICIENTLY TO GO GALLIVANTING OFF ON SOME ADVENTURE?
A SUBJECT WITH SUCH *ENHANCE-MENTS* WOULD HAVE BEEN *INVALUABLE* TO US.

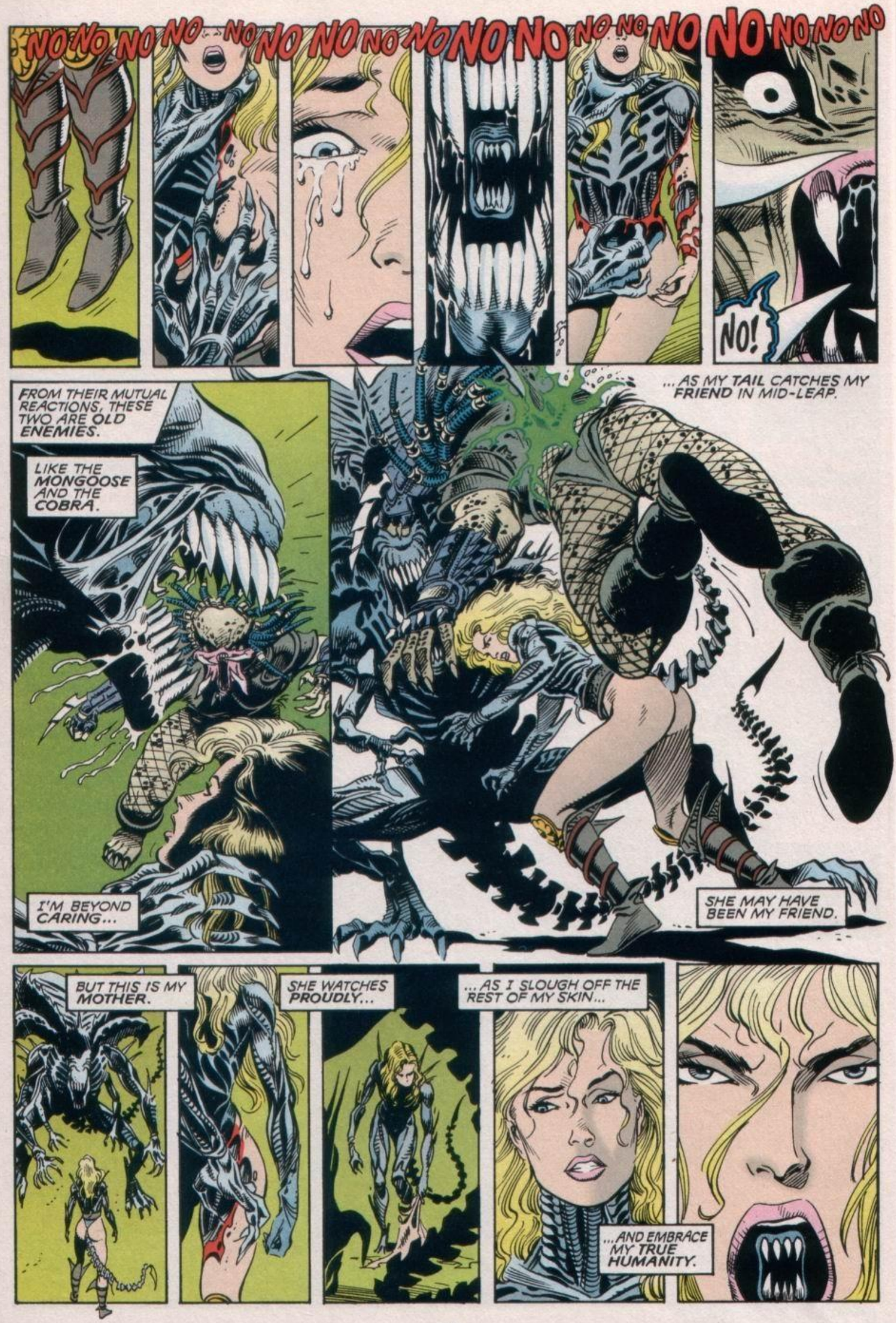
I DIDN'T KNOW SHE HAD THEM!
DEAR BOY, ON THE BASIS OF YOUR *COMMIT-MENTS*, EVENTS HAVE BEEN SET IN MOTION.
THEY CANNOT BE SET ASIDE SIMPLY BECAUSE YOU HAVE *FAILED* TO FULFILL THEM.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! WHAT DO YOU MEAN?!
THINK OF IT AS AN END TO SUFFERING.
A TRANS-FIGURATION OF THE FLESH TO A MORE GLORIOUS STATE OF BEING.
FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, DeMATIER!
IT IS FOR LOVE THAT WE OFFER THIS SACRAMENT, DEAR BOY.
THINK OF IT, WILLEM--STRENGTH BEYOND IMAGINATION, COUPLED WITH A BEAUTY UNLIKE ANY CONCEIVED OF. UNIQUE AND IMMORTAL.
SOMEONE-- ANYONE-- HELP ME!
TOY!
THEY CAN'T HEAR YOU, WILLEM. NO ONE WILL COME.
LEAST OF ALL YOUR FATHER'S ELECTRONIC AMANUENSIS.
PROFESSOR, PLEASE, DON'T DO THIS. I THOUGHT WE WERE PARTNERS-- I THOUGHT WE WERE FRIENDS!
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?!
REGRETTABLY, DEAR BOY, WE HAVE RUN INTO SOMETHING OF A ROADBLOCK WITH THE PROJECT. WE HAVE BECOME QUITE PROFICIENT IN THE PRODUCTION OF DRONES.
BUT, OF COURSE, THEY'RE ALL MULES. THEY CANNOT REPRODUCE.
FOR THAT, WE REQUIRE A QUEEN.
NO!
IS ANYTHING AMISS, WILLEM?
SCAN THE SUITE, TOY! IS THERE ANY SIGN OF INTRUDERS?
NOT IN THE SLIGHTEST. ALL HEREIN IS AS IT SHOULD BE.
SHALL I SUMMON OFFICERS OF THE SECURITATE TO CONDUCT A FURTHER INSPECTION?
NO. NO. THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY.
MUST HAVE BEEN THAT DAMN SCRIPT YOU HAD ME READ-- GAVE ME NIGHTMARES.
I CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT IT WAS-- BUT I'M ALL RIGHT NOW.
IT WAS ONLY A DREAM.

THE NEXT TIME BIG MAMA COMES FOR ME...
...I FIGURE-- I'M SURE-- I'LL BE READY!
OF COURSE, SHE HAS OTHER IDEAS.
I'M NO MATCH FOR HER IN TERMS OF RAW STRENGTH.
I FIGURE TO MAKE UP THE DIFFERENCE WITH SPEED.
AND WHEN THAT DOESN'T WORK...
...I TRY SNEAKY.
BEFORE I HIT THE FLOOR, THE CHAMELEON FIELD MAKES ME FUNCTIONALLY INVISIBLE.
AT WHICH POINT...
...I GET THE HELL OUT OF HER WAY!

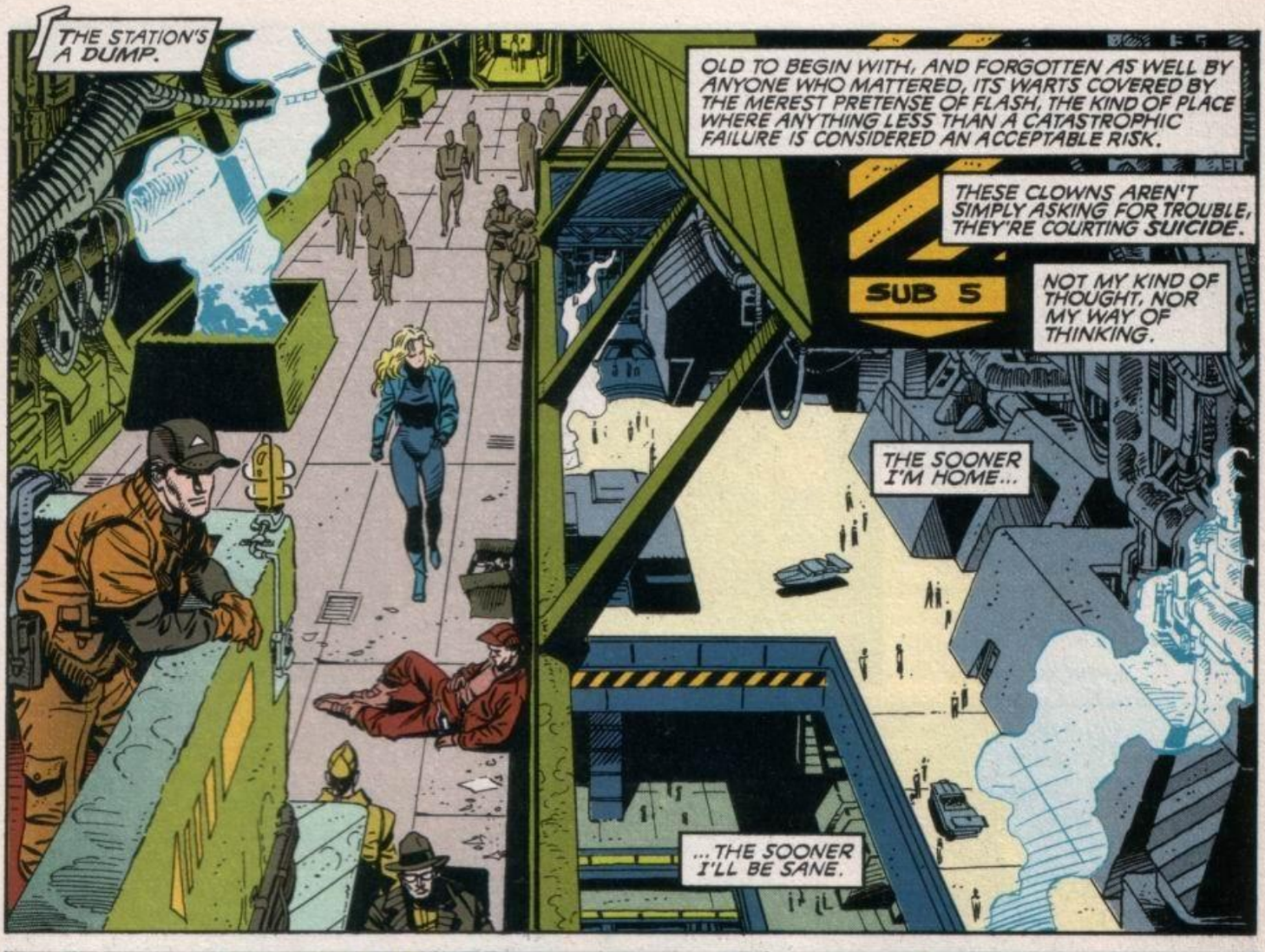
WE'RE FIGHTING HAND TO HAND.
NO WEAPON WITH A REACH LONGER THAN OUR ARMS.
WE BOTH KNOW, IF I HAD A PLASMA CASTER, SHE'D BE DEAD.
MY PROBLEM IS, I CAN'T WIN WITHOUT MAKING A MOVE.
THAT'S WHAT SHE'S WAITING FOR.
SNIK!
!
I GIVE IT MY VERY BEST.
IT'S NOT ENOUGH.


FOR A MOMENT, I WONDER IF THIS IS WHEN SHE DECIDES I'M MORE TROUBLE THAN I'M WORTH.
NOT YET.
I MUST BE GETTING BETTER.
I'VE NEVER FELT SO TIRED-- OR SO SORE.
SHE DIDN'T PULL ANY PUNCHES, UNTIL THE END.
MY FIRST MISTAKE WOULD HAVE BEEN MY LAST.
SHE'S TRAINING ME AS SHE WOULD ONE OF HER OWN.
I'M NOT YET HER EQUAL...
... BUT THAT DAY'S COMING.
WHO'D'VE THOUGHT A TROPHY HAD IT IN HER?
THEN, SUDDENLY, IT ISN'T A GAME ANYMORE.
NO!
MATER CHRISTI-- NO!
NOT SIMPLY AN ALIEN.
BUT A QUEEN!
AS QUICK AS SHE IS SMART!
I KNOW I'M DEAD.
I PRAY IT WON'T HURT.


NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO!
FROM THEIR MUTUAL REACTIONS, THESE TWO ARE OLD ENEMIES.
LIKE THE MONGOOSE AND THE COBRA.
I'M BEYOND CARING...
...AS MY TAIL CATCHES MY FRIEND IN MID-LEAP.
SHE MAY HAVE BEEN MY FRIEND.
BUT THIS IS MY MOTHER.
SHE WATCHES PROUDLY...
...AS I SLOUGH OFF THE REST OF MY SKIN...
...AND EMBRACE MY TRUE HUMANITY.

NO!
COPPER TASTE OF BLOOD IN MY MOUTH, SHAPE-MEMORY OF DOUBLE FANGS STRETCHING WIDE IN EAGER HUNGER...
...MY EYES SERVE NO FUNCTION I UNDERSTAND, THERE ARE SO MANY BETTER MEANS OF PERCEPTION, AS I GRAB REFLEXIVELY WITH LIMBS THAT DON'T EXIST TO STOP MY FALL...
I SOB MY HEART OUT.
A GRIEF I REFUSE TO COMPREHEND.
A YEARNING AS NATURAL AS I KNOW IT IS OBSCENE.
WHAT IS HAPPENING TO ME?!
WHAT IS HAPPENING TO ME?!
THE ALIENS ARE HUMANITY'S ENEMY.
THAT'S THE FUNDAMENTAL REALITY OF OUR EXISTENCE.
THEY ARE THE DEVIL MADE FLESH.
WHERE--?!
A SPACE STATION?!?
SPACE STATION SAMARA
DOCKING BAY 27
STARSHIP ELLEN RIPLEY
ASH PARNALL, COMMANDER
IT'S ONLY A NIGHTMARE, I TELL MYSELF.
BUT SO WERE MY DREAMS OF ASH PARNALL AND HER PREDATOR.

IT'S MORE THAN I CAN BEAR.
DAMN YOU BOTH! DAMN YOU!
I WON'T PLAY YOUR PUPPET ANYMORE!
ALL I WANT-- IS OUT.
I DON'T CONSIDER HOW I'LL GET THERE.
THE MOMENT I CYCLE THE FLIGHT-DECK HATCH, MY ATMOSPHERE'S OVERWHELMED BY THE PREDATOR'S.
ON MY WAY TOWARDS THE MAIN AIRLOCK...
...I COLLIDE FULL-TILT WITH THE PREDATOR'S COFFIN.
SHE DOESN'T NOTICE. I DON'T KNOW WHETHER SHE'S DEAD OR HEALING.
I DON'T CARE.
ASH... PARNALL...
SHUT UP!
I DON'T HEAR YOU! I'M DONE WITH YOU! WE'RE THROUGH!
I SHOULD HAVE SAVED MY BREATH.
IT ONLY MAKES ME SICK.


THE STATION'S A DUMP.
OLD TO BEGIN WITH, AND FORGOTTEN AS WELL BY ANYONE WHO MATTERED, ITS WARTS COVERED BY THE MEREST PRETENSE OF FLASH, THE KIND OF PLACE WHERE ANYTHING LESS THAN A CATASTROPHIC FAILURE IS CONSIDERED AN ACCEPTABLE RISK.
THESE CLOWNS AREN'T SIMPLY ASKING FOR TROUBLE, THEY'RE COURTING SUICIDE.
SUB 5
NOT MY KIND OF THOUGHT, NOR MY WAY OF THINKING.
THE SOONER I'M HOME...
...THE SOONER I'LL BE SANE.

I NEED TO SEND A TRANSCOM SIGNAL TO EARTH, PLEASE. CAN THAT BE ARRANGED?
WE'RE IN OCCLUSION.
FUME
ONLY MILSEC TRANSCOMS UNTIL THE FLARES SUBSIDE.
I'LL NEED A ROOM, THEN.
TELECO

YOU LOOK LIKE YOU NEED A DRINK MORE, SWEETIE.
HANG IN THE LOUNGE, RELAX YOURSELF...
...I'LL CALL WHEN EVERY-THING'S ARRANGED.

THANK YOU. THAT'S VERY KIND.
NOT AT ALL, SWEETIE. 'S WHY I'M HERE.
ROCCO, THE LOOKER IN BLACK LEATHER, JUST WALKIN' THROUGH YOUR DOOR...
...WHATEVER SHE ASKS FOR, YOU SERVE HER THE SPECIAL RESERVE-- HEAR WHAT I'M SAYIN'?
NO LIMIT.

I WAS MAD.
THAT'S THE ONLY EXPLANATION.
PERHAPS I STILL AM.
MERCIFUL GOD, HOW I WISH THIS WAS SOME VIRTUAL SCENARIO, ONE OF TOY'S ADVENTURES.
I'M SO TIRED.
YOUR DRINK, MA'AM.
I DON'T BELONG HERE.
WHAT COULD HAVE POSSESSED ME--?
I AM WHAT I AM. WHERE'S THE SHAME IN BEING A TROPHY? IT NEVER BOTHERED ME BEFORE NOW.
AND IT WON'T, EVER AGAIN.
ANOTHER, PLEASE. THAT WAS GOOD.
I LABEL THIS A BENCHMARK MOMENT.
THE END OF MISERY.
WHEN NEXT I WAKE, I'LL BE HOME AND SAFE, AND ALL WILL BE RIGHT IN MY WORLD.
NAGEL! THE GODS HAVE BLESSED US BOTH TODAY, MY OLD COCK.
WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO SALVAGE ACCESS TO A STARSHIP?
I'M LISTENING.
IT'S IN BERTH 27, READY AND WAITING TO BE STRIPPED TO THE BARE METAL.
"THE OWNER'S IN MY LOUNGE, THREE SPECIALS ON THE ROAD TO BLISSFUL OBLIVION. SHE'S A TROPHY, NAGEL, CONFIRMED BY A FULL-SPECTRUM GENE-SCAN!"
"YOU'VE DONE WELL, KIRA MY DARLING. WE PUT HER ON THE CIRCUIT-- WITH THE PROPER PREP AND PRICE--
"--YOU AN' ME, WE'LL BE SET FOR LIFE!"
NEXT: RUDE AWAKENINGS

Dear Dark Horse,

I can't stand it anymore! I pushed myself all the way this time. I finally sent in a letter to my most favorite literary publication in the universe! Now it is time to spill my guts all over the table!

The Predators are *gods*! (Well, at least titans.) I've been keeping track since the beginning, and my questions and suggestions have boiled up into a mass of tattered brain cells. My first explosion of praise is for the bizarre yet eye-catching *Deadliest of the Species*! I think it's great that another heroine is in the house. (Another role model for me to worship.) The story is gradually answering all my questions — to the point of asking me questions! I'm hoping that the ending of this series has a massive finale. (With fireworks, too.) Also, *Predator: Bad Blood* is exactly what my black heart craves. (Frame of speech, my friends.) Seeing a hunter turn against his own is pretty "spine"-tingling.

Now, about those questions:

1. When people number their questions, do you expect a zillion more? (If yes, you're correct!)

2. In issue #2 of *The Deadliest of the Species*, Jeff Schmitz asked, "Why is there women?" Predator females . . . a subject that is very much a part of my vocabulary. Well, my question to anyone who thinks likewise: why not? Is Dark Horse planning a proper introduction to the Predator's opposite gender? (Being an accomplished artist, I have rendered a rather accurate portrayal of these elusive females. I would send it in, hoping, of course, that I don't reveal the surprise.)

3. What's with the Predator's losing streak? I'm not trying to foretell the future, but the past has screamed for itself. I'm sorry to say that it's disheartening to see that every single battle ends up a loss. (Even Broken Tusk met the hunter in the sky.)

That's it for my questions. Now, to other matters of interest. The rumors and speculation about a motion picture about Aliens vs. Predators is something that I can deal with. I've heard from good sources that a summer '94 release is scheduled. I'm eagerly awaiting the outcome of that.

It's been great so far, guys and gals, but ol' Tal has to hit the hay — violently. (Hey, violence keeps people at the movies; why not keep me asleep?!)

Talena Coba
6226 Farragut Drive
San Antonio, TX 78238

Talena, I'm glad to see that at least one other gal (besides myself) is reading this series. Because female readers make up such a small percentage of the general comics audience, it's always especially gratifying to hear from the "fairer" sex. So . . . bring on the women!

Now, as to your questions:

1. At *least* a zillion.

2. Well, you tell me whether we've provided a proper introduction to Big Mama or not. When Jackson Guice began pencilling this series, I did specifically request that our female Predator *not* be the usual male-clone-with-oversize-breasts. What do you think about that? And, um, why *is* there women? (We still haven't answered that question, have we?)

3. Good point — although I suspect that it has something to do with the Predator always being the "bad guy." Then again, our Big Mama is no "guy" — though she may very well be one *bad* mother!

As to the proposed *Aliens vs. Predator* movie, I believe that the project has been tabled for the moment, so a summer '94 release seems unlikely.

Dear Diana:

Thinking that I wouldn't miss much if I took a little time off from reading comics and sending Dark Horse letters just goes to prove the old adage about mice and men.

Anyway, on to the reason for this letter. I have always enjoyed anything dealing with both Aliens and Predators, but I didn't think that you would be able to bring them both back together again. I thought, "Hey, they've already run one *Aliens vs. Predator*; they couldn't do it a second time and do it as well." So, in all of my usual brilliance, I left the world of comics. No more Dark Horse, no more *Spawn*, no more nothin'. (Speaking of which, what has happened to *Dark Horse Comics* and *Presents*?) So, unexpectantly, I go into my used-to-be favorite comics store, and what do I see but issues #1 and #2 of *Aliens/Predator*. After reading both of them, I was pleasantly surprised. I loved it. From cover to cover I found both the story and the artwork to be *wunderbar*. I am glad to see that it will be a 12-issue story. Draw it out as long as possible. I'm really looking forward to issue #3. Everything about the book is so good. Chris has done a wonderful job of writing; Jackson and Eduardo have done a good tag-team (Whoomp! There it is!) of artwork; even Mr. Bolton has done a superb job on the covers.

Anyway, enough gushing from me. Just let

it be said that I am sorry that I haven't been a faithful reader of Dark Horse comics of late and that I will religiously read them from now on and write as often as possible.

Galen S. West
1801 Coffee Rd. #68
Modesto, CA 95355

True to his word, Galen sent the following shortly thereafter . . .

Dear Diana:

Just a quick note about issue #3: I can't even imagine where the series is going to go from here. The only obvious thing is that we are going to find out about who, or what, Ash Parnall is. Otherwise, I am in the dark as to the direction of the book. I can't wait to find out, though.

As usual, the artwork is wonderful. Sorry to see that we are losing the current artist. But the new one coming in isn't so bad himself.

Well, see you next issue.

Galen S. West
1801 Coffee Rd. #68
Modesto, CA 95355

Welcome back to the fold, Galen. Just for your information, both *Dark Horse Comics* and *Dark Horse Presents* are indeed still being published — and if you've not been reading recent issues of *DHP*, you're missing out on Eddie Campbell's epic nine-part tale, *Hermes versus the Eyeball Kid*. Talk about a clash of titans!

And speaking of Ash Parnall . . .

Dear Dark Horse,

I am a fan of all Aliens and Predator stories, and in a comic I have recently started to collect, called *Aliens/Predator: The Deadliest of the Species*, by Chris Claremont, the Predator keeps saying, "Ash Parnall," and I think I know what she means.

In a comic which I have got, called *Renegade* **[which appeared in *Dark Horse Comics* #1-2]**, there is a woman from another planet (I think) named Ash Parnall. *Renegade* is also by Chris Claremont. Is there a link? Please inform me on the subject.

Dan McNamara-Jones
17 Lyndhurst Ave.
Richmond
Twickenham
London
England

You don't *really* want me to tell you the answer, do you, Dan? Why spoil the suspense? You'll just have to keep reading.

Dear Diana,

I have to admit that you (along with the extremely creative staff of Chris Claremont, Jackson Guice, et al.) are doing what I thought would never be done — bringing me into Dark Horse comics. I picked up *The Deadliest of the Species* only because I was wondering what a conflict between my two favorite aliens would be like. So far, I'm not disappointed.

Mr. Claremont, let me just say I'm glad you're doing this series. I have enjoyed your work on *Uncanny X-Men*, but this series is blowing away anything you've ever done for Marvel. The story line is smooth and flowing, yet makes me wonder what's going on. That's good. I like mysteries.

Mr. Guice, your art is spectacular — just perfect for Chris' writing. I can't really say what my favorite scene is, because they're *all* my favorite scenes.

I've got so many good things to say about this, I don't even know where to begin. My sister would probably have a cow if she knew someone had invented "trophy wives," but I think they sort of add to the story, making it even more intriguing. At least, it's a vision of the future I've never seen. What I like most is that the characters seem more lifelike than in most comics. I assume I have Mr. Claremont to thank for that. He's always been good at developing characters.

My only problem with this series is that there aren't enough Aliens. In the first three comics, we've only seen those monsters once. Come on! It *is* called *Aliens/Predator*, after all. But I'm sure we'll see them in the future — uh, comics, that is.

Oh, and let me (and my bank account) thank you for publishing these comics bimonthly. It really helps, especially with everything else I buy.

Keep up the good work, and I'll keep buying. Of course, with Claremont writing, I know I have nothing to worry about.

Randy Wright
1006 Royalist Road
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464

Thanks for your kind words, Randy, and — not to worry — before too much longer, you'll have more Aliens on your hands than you know what to do with! Trust me.

As to the concept of "trophy wives," um, all I have to say is . . . moo!

Next issue: As if Caryn and Big Mama aren't in enough trouble already with the inhabitants of Space Station Samara, when one of those inhabitants turns out to be an Alien queen, *everyone* is in for some "Rude Awakenings"!

— Diana Schutz, she-editor